

Sermon for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany

'And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.'

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It would seem to be madness, that sons, hearing the call of a complete stranger, would leave not only their job, but *their father*, and follow a wandering eccentric.

Perhaps it was the innate charisma of the Christ that caused these men to *leave their boat*; and yet, there is no mention of his charisma, or character, or glory, or attraction. And yet they follow.

Perhaps it was the power of Christ's rhetorical force that convinced these two disciples, James and John, to leave everything they had. And yet, it is hard to believe that the phrase *'I will make you fishers of men,'* is a sufficient public speaking device to convince a man to forsake his entire life and family to submit themselves to what would have been considered at the time a 'homeless man.'

Perhaps it was the inner meaning of this phrase *'fishers of men'*, that enticed them. And yet, what exactly does this phrase mean? Theologians argue about this to this day. Who would argue that these disciples immediately discerned the sense of this vague metaphor at first hearing, whilst busying themselves in the act of fishing?

But it is written: *'they left their father in the boat.'*

A boat wanders the sea, a place where no man has any place being; filled with flesh eating monstrosities and unending depths; of waters which drown, and pirates which enslave. The sea, going off into the horizon, where Noah once was lost; where all mankind was destroyed, for *the Spirit of the Lord will not abide with man forever, for he is flesh.'*

It is the fate of man to be lost in the sea of this world, the primordial chaos of a world without God, waters where the spirit of God no longer *dwells over*. We hated God, and we hated His creation; and so now we float upon the sea of uncreation. The sea of disorder, of a world without *the Spirit of the Lord dwelling over it*; without it, because we cast it out, banishing the *Spirit over the waters*, that created all things in the beginning, that we might return to the madness and anarchy out of which we were born.

In cursing the Spirit of Our Lord, we cursed the Spirit of the Father. No longer was then God our Father, nor were we His children, His beloved creation. We imagined new fathers; false and pagan gods, who went by many man-made names, all of them false, and false to the core. We attributed to them godless qualities, sinful traits. We imagined them as killers, as rapists, as jealous, as petty, as small. We imagined them as we see ourselves. These were the new fathers we invented; these gods, which we *created in our own image*, for we do and are all these things.

So hateful, so strifeful were these new gods which we formed, that the Greek Heraclitus uttered the simple axiom that, 'War is the father of us all.'

Forsaking the Prince of Peace, we chose war; war between nation and nation, between man and man, neighbor and neighbor, wife and husband, parent and child. Conflict, dissention, chaos, wandering; this we chose to be the new rule in every aspect of our life, for we chose the sea, where man has no place.

In this sea we have made for ourselves a boat, an ark of sorts, of our own devising, this thing we call civilization, the invention of Cain, who Genesis tells us is the father of murder, and after that, the father of cities and walls and tools and weapons; civilization shields us, at least for a time, from the hell that surrounds us at every moment.

And yet, even in this civilization which we have formed to guard against the madness of the sea, chaos still prevails, for a boat is still tossed by the gales and waves of the waters. Watch the news on any day, and you will see the strife, even in the midst of our 'civilization'. Ultimately, Democracy, a word we take pride in, is nothing but a well controlled battle between mutually angered parties. Indeed, *in forty days, even Nineveh will be overthrown*.

But it seems we have wandered far from the point.

'They left their father in the boat.'

How could they not? These, among the first called of the disciples, James and John, have been called to forsake their earthly father, their earthly strife, and this raft which they have made to survive in the watery fray of the world which we call cities and culture and countries.

A man stands on dry ground, and declares *'follow me.'* Leave this broken life you have made for yourselves. Leave it, and *'follow me.'* That you may no longer serve the war, *the father of us all*, but *the Son*, and in Him know God, the Father of all Creation. To see Him in Christ, *as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

By these Apostles, dear Christians, were we torn from the sea of hatred and pride, as an angler rips fish from the waters, for indeed, these disciples became *fishers of men.*

By their words, the words of the Apostles and prophets, have we been drawn out from the waters of chaos, and dwell on the firm land, that we might not live in the world we made for ourselves, but live in the *world without end.*

And for this, let us *rejoice and be glad.*

'For the present form of this world is passing away.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Jonah 3:1-5, 10; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20.